



Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

⑯



⑯ Publication number:

0 397 201 B1

⑯

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

⑯ Date of publication of patent specification: **10.08.94** ⑯ Int. Cl. 5: **G03G 21/00**

⑯ Application number: **90108931.8**

⑯ Date of filing: **11.05.90**

⑯ **Electrophotographic apparatus.**

⑯ Priority: **11.05.89 JP 117843/89**
11.05.89 JP 117845/89

⑯ Date of publication of application:
14.11.90 Bulletin 90/46

⑯ Publication of the grant of the patent:
10.08.94 Bulletin 94/32

⑯ Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB IT NL SE

⑯ References cited:
US-A- 4 619 523

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, vol. 11, no. 299 (P-621)(2746), 29th September 1987 & JP-A-6292984

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, vol. 8, no. 248 (P-313)(1685), 14th November 1984 & JP-A-59121370

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, vol. 12, no. 2 (P-652)(2849), 7th January 1988 & JP-A-62163081

⑯ Proprietor: **TOKYO ELECTRIC CO., LTD.**
6-13, 2-chome, Nakameguro
Meguro-ku Tokyo (JP)

⑯ Inventor: **Yamaguchi, Yasuyoshi**
233 Kamishima ,
Oohito-cho,
Tagata-gun
Shizuoka-ken (JP)
Inventor: **Matsuda, Susumu**
1327-29, Kashiya,
Kannami-cho,
Tagata-gun
Shizuoka-ken (JP)

⑯ Representative: **Schmidt-Evers, Jürgen,**
Dipl.-Ing. et al
Patentanwälte Mitscherlich & Partner
Postfach 33 06 09
D-80066 München (DE)

EP 0 397 201 B1

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid (Art. 99(1) European patent convention).

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, vol. 7, no. 270 (P-240)(1415), 2nd December 1985 & JP-A-58149084

PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN, vol. 13, no. 64 (P-827)(3412), 14th February 1989 & JP-A-63250676

PATENT ABSTRACT OF JAPAN, vol. 9, no. 276 (P-402)(1999), 2nd November 1985 & JP-A-60119589

Description

The present invention relates to an electrophotographic apparatus.

For example, JP-A-62 92984 discloses such an electrophotographic apparatus with a cleaning device including a magnetic brush and a main cleaning member. This main cleaning member works mechanically by using a blade. Both, the magnetic cleaning member and the mechanical cleaning member are employed alternately.

JP-A-58 149084 discloses a further electrophotographic apparatus having a cleaning device wherein a counter is provided as to count the number of copying sheets passing through the apparatus and to cause a mechanical cleaning operation when a predetermined count value is reached.

JP-A-63 250676 discloses the arrangement of a cleaning device having mechanical and magnetic cleaning means. The magnetic cleaning means is abutted on an photosensitive drum almost simultaneously with the mechanical cleaning member.

In general, an electrophotographic apparatus comprises a drum-shaped image carrier disposed in an apparatus casing for rotation and an image forming mechanism arranged around the image carrier. The image forming mechanism includes a charger for uniformly charging the surface of the image carrier and an exposure unit for applying a laser beam to the charged image carrier surface in accordance with print data or the like, thereby forming an electrostatic latent image on the surface. The mechanism further includes a developing device for applying a toner to the image carrier surface with the electrostatic latent image thereon, thereby developing the latent image, a transfer device for transferring the resulting toner image to a paper sheet, and a de-electrifier for de-electrifying the image carrier after transfer. These elements are arranged successively around the image carrier.

If the toner or paper dust adheres to or remains on the surface of the image carrier after the transfer of the toner image, part of the printable surface of the paper sheet to be printed next may often blacken, thus entailing defective printing. Accordingly, the electrophotographic apparatus is provided with a cleaning system for cleaning the surface of the image carrier after the transfer.

Conventional cleaning systems include mechanical and magnetic cleaning systems.

In the mechanical cleaning system, a blade is brought into contact with the surface of the image carrier so that the residual toner is scraped from the image carrier surface by the blade, and the scraped toner is collected into a waste toner receiving portion. Since this system is designed so

that the residual toner is scraped off directly by means of the blade, the image carrier can be satisfactorily cleaned for a long period of time. If the blade vibrates or if the pressure of contact

5 between the blade and the image carrier becomes too high during the cleaning operation, however, the surface of the image carrier can be easily damaged. Thus, satisfactory print quality cannot be maintained.

10 The magnetic cleaning system, which is formed integrally with the developing device, cooperates therewith to effect development and remove the toner remaining on the surface of the image carrier by magnetic force so that the removed toner is recovered in the developing device. Although the control of the magnetic cleaning system is more complicated than that of the mechanical cleaning system, the magnetic system can recover the residual toner for reuse without touching the

15 image carrier. Accordingly, many of modern electrophotographic apparatuses use the magnetic cleaning system.

20 When the residual toner adheres firmly to the surface of the image carrier, however, it cannot be securely removed if the image carrier surface is cleaned by means of the magnetic cleaning system whose cleaning capacity is lower than that of the mechanical cleaning system. In such a case, the residual toner causes defective printing, such as 25 partial blackening of the printable surface of the paper sheet. If the cleaning capacity of the cleaning system is lowered during use, in particular, defective printing is liable to be caused.

30 The cleaning capacity of the magnetic cleaning system cannot be adjusted during the operation of the electrophotographic apparatus. In order to eliminate defective printing caused during the operation of the apparatus, therefore, the operation must be interrupted to adjust the cleaning system, 35 thereby increasing its cleaning capacity. Accordingly, the printing efficiency is lowered. This problem may possibly be solved by previously adjusting the cleaning system to the maximum cleaning capacity before the start of the operation of the apparatus. If this is done, however, lowering of the 40 capacity of the cleaning system will be accelerated, so that the lifetime of the system will be shortened.

45 The present invention has been contrived in consideration of these circumstances, and its object is to provide an electrophotographic apparatus capable of stably cleaning an image carrier for a long period of time and preventing the print quality and printing efficiency from lowering.

50 This object is solved by the characterizing features of claim 1 or 5.

55 This invention can be more fully understood from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in

which:

Figs. 1 to 15 show an electrophotographic apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention, in which

Fig. 1 is a sectional view schematically showing the apparatus;

Fig. 1A is a perspective view showing an operating knob of a mechanical cleaning system and its surroundings;

Fig. 2 is a timing chart for illustrating the operation of a magnetic cleaning system;

Fig. 3A is a timing chart for illustrating a first-mode operation of the mechanical cleaning system;

Fig. 3B is a timing chart for illustrating a second-mode operation of the mechanical cleaning system;

Fig. 3C is a timing chart for illustrating a third-mode operation of the mechanical cleaning system;

Fig. 4 is a flow chart showing the first mode;

Figs. 5 to 9 are flow charts showing the second mode;

Figs. 10 to 14 are flow charts showing the third mode;

Fig. 15 is a flow chart showing optional processing; and

Fig. 16 is a sectional view showing an electrophotographic apparatus according to another embodiment of the invention.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

As shown in Fig. 1, an electrophotographic apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention comprises a casing 7 and an image forming mechanism 10 disposed therein. The mechanism 10 includes a rotatable photoconductive drum 1 as an image carrier, a charger 2 for uniformly charging the surface of the drum, and an exposure unit 3 for applying a laser beam to the charged drum surface in accordance with print data or the like, thereby forming an electrostatic latent image on the drum surface. The mechanism 10 further includes a developing device 4 for applying a toner to the drum surface with the electrostatic latent image thereon, thereby developing the latent image, a transfer device 5 for transferring the resulting toner image to a paper sheet 9, and an eraser 6 for de-electrifying the drum after transfer. These elements are arranged successively around the drum.

The electrophotographic apparatus further comprises a magnetic cleaning system 14 for cleaning the surface of the drum 1. The system 14, which is formed integrally with the developing device 4, cooperates therewith to remove the toner remaining on the surface of the drum 1 by means

of magnetic action. The removed toner is recovered in a housing 12 of the developing device 4. The developing device 4, which is connected electrically to a control unit 30 mentioned later, alternately performs developing and cleaning operations at intervals of predetermined time t under the control of the control unit. The time t is adjusted to the period of time required for one revolution of the drum 1.

Furthermore, the electrophotographic apparatus comprises a mechanical cleaning system 20 which is used to supplement the cleaning capacity of the magnetic cleaning system 14. The system 20 includes a blade 22, which can touch and leave the surface of the drum 1.

More specifically, the cleaning system 20 includes a lever 24 which is rotatable around a pivot 24a in the casing 7, and the blade 22 is fixed to the lower end portion of the lever. As the lever 24 rotates, the blade 22 can move between a contact position where it is in contact with the surface of the drum 1 and an off position where it is kept apart from the drum surface. In the contact position, the blade 22 serves to scrape off the residual toner from the drum surface, and the scraped toner is recovered in a receiving portion 23 defined by a housing 21. A tension spring 27 is stretched between the lever 24 and the casing 7, and the lever 24 and the blade 22 are normally kept in the off position shown in Fig. 1.

The upper end portion of the lever 24 projects to the outside of the casing 7 through an opening 7a in the casing. An operating knob 24b is attached to the projecting end of the lever 24. In this arrangement, the blade 22 can be moved to the contact position by manually rotating the lever 24 in the direction of arrow A, against the urging force of the spring 27, from outside the casing 7. Thus, by manually operating the lever 24 to cause the blade 22 to touch and leave the surface of the drum 1 with desired timing, the cleaning capacity of the whole electrophotographic apparatus can be improved in accordance with printing results, without interrupting the operation of the apparatus.

As shown in Fig. 1A, a scale 8 for indicating the shift of the lever 24 is disposed on the outer surface of the casing 7 in the vicinity of the opening 7a. The pressure of contact between the blade 22 and the surface of the drum 1 can be easily adjusted by regulating the shift of the lever 24 according to the scale 8.

Further, the cleaning system 20 includes a solenoid 25 as a drive source for automatically rotating the lever 24. The solenoid 25, which has a plunger 25a connected to the lever 24, is connected to the control unit 30 through an interface 26. When the solenoid 25 is excited in response to a signal from the unit 30, the plunger 25a is drawn

into the solenoid, so that the lever 24 is rotated in the direction of arrow A against the urging force of the spring 27. As a result, the blade 22 is brought into contact with the surface of the drum 1, thereby cleaning the drum surface.

The control unit 30 is constructed by using a CPU, ROM, RAM, control panel, timer, etc., which constitutes a computer circuit in an automatic control device for controlling the operation of the image forming mechanism 10. If a key 31 on the control panel is depressed, the unit 30 excites the solenoid 25, thereby moving the blade 22. Programmed in the ROM are various operating modes for automatically intermittently operating the cleaning system 20 at suitable time intervals, e.g., first to third operating modes.

If the first mode is established, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 for predetermined operating times T0, T1, T2, T3, ... at intervals of predetermined times (rest-times) t0, t1, t2, t3, ..., as shown in Fig. 3A. The rest-times and operating times are adjusted to periods of time which allow the residual toner, having failed to be removed by means of the magnetic cleaning system 14, to be scraped off by means of the blade 22 without damaging the surface of the drum 1. For example, the rest-times t0, t1, t2, t3, ... are regular, and each rest-time is adjusted to the operation time of the apparatus required for 600 prints. The operating times T0, T1, T2, T3, ... are regular, and each operating time is adjusted to the operation time required for two prints.

In general, the longer the operation time of the apparatus, the more the residual toner adhering to the surface of the drum 1 is. Thereupon, according to the second operating mode, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 for gradually increasing predetermined operating times T0, T1, T2, T3, ... at the regular intervals of the rest-times t0, t1, t2, t3, ..., as shown in Fig. 3B. For example, each rest-time is equivalent to the period of time required for 600 prints, and the operating times T0, T1, T2 and T3 are equivalent to the periods of time required 2, 3, 4 and 5 prints, respectively. In this embodiment, the cleaning system 20 is driven for the operating time T0 before the passage of the rest-time $t0 \times 10$ after the start of use of the drum 1; T1 before the passage of the rest-time $t1 \times 8$ thereafter, T2 before the passage of the rest time $t2 \times 5$ thereafter, and T3 before the passage of the rest-time $t3 \times 3$ thereafter.

If the third mode is established, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 for the regular operating times T0, T1, T2, T3, ..., equivalent to the period of time required for, e.g., two prints, at gradually reducing rest-times t0, t1, t2, t3, ..., as shown in Fig. 3C. If the lifetime of the drum 1 is equivalent to the period of time required

for 15,000 prints, the first ten rest-times after the start of use of the drum 1 are t0 (equivalent to the period for 600 prints), second ten rest-times are t1 (equivalent to the period for 400 prints), third ten rest-times are t2 (equivalent to the period for 300 prints), and the last ten rest-times are t3 (equivalent to the period for 200 prints).

These values selected for the rest-times and the operating times are entered in the ROM of the control unit 30 through the control panel, so that they can be changed through the panel.

The ROM is programmed to the effect that the cleaning system 20 be driven by the control unit 30 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1 for a predetermined time Tr even during a rest-time when the blade 22 is kept off the drum surface, if the key 31 on the control panel is depressed to input an optional command signal. In other words, if the optional command signal is entered by means of the key 31, the CPU of the control unit 30 excites the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface for the predetermined time Tr, as shown in Figs. 3A to 3C, prior to the execution of a supplementary cleaning program based on the operating mode.

The following is a description of the operation of the electrophotographic apparatus constructed in this manner.

If a start command is inputted through the control panel of the apparatus, the automatic control device causes the drum 1 to rotate, and drives the charger 2, exposure unit 3, developing device 4, etc. in predetermined steps of procedure, thereby forming a toner image on the surface of the drum 1. The toner image is transferred to the fed paper sheet 9 in the transfer device 5, and thereafter, the eraser 6 is driven to de-electrify the residual charge on the drum surface.

When the image forming cycle is finished in this manner, the automatic control device stops driving the charger 2, exposure unit 3, developing device 4, transfer device 5, etc., and causes the control unit 30 to actuate the magnetic cleaning system 14 while rotating the drum 1. Thereupon, the drum 1 is cleaned for the predetermined time t_1 , as shown in Fig. 2, and the magnetic toner remaining on the drum surface is recovered in the housing 12 of the developing device 4. Thereafter, printing operation is continuously performed while alternately repeating the image forming cycle and the cleaning cycle.

During the printing operation, the control unit 30 actuates the mechanical cleaning system 20 in accordance with the selected operating mode, thereby supplementing the cleaning capacity of the magnetic cleaning system 14.

When the operation time of the apparatus comes to the rest-time t0 (equivalent to the period

for 600 prints) in the case where the first operating mode is selected, the control unit 30 drives the solenoid 25 through the interface 26, thereby bringing the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1 for the operating time T_0 (equivalent to the period for two prints), as shown in Fig. 3A. More specifically, when the operation of the apparatus is started, as shown in Fig. 4, the unit 30 reads print counter data E from a memory, and determines whether the value of the data E is "600." If the value is less than "600," the data E is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If value of the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. In this state, the drum 1 is caused to make one revolution, so that the residual toner on the drum surface is mechanically removed. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum surface, and clears the counter data E . The RAM stored with the counter data E is backed up by a battery so that the data can be maintained even if the electrophotographic apparatus is disconnected from the power supply.

Thus, the surface of the drum 1 is supplementally cleaned by means of the blade 22, so that the residual toner, having failed to be removed by means of the magnetic cleaning system 14, can be scraped off.

Thereafter, the control unit 30 drives the solenoid 25 with the passage of each of the regular rest-times $t_0, t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots$, so that the blade 22 is brought into contact with the surface of the drum 1 for the regular operating times $T_0, T_1, T_2, T_3, \dots$, thereby scraping off the unrecovered residual toner.

When the second operating mode is established, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 for the gradually increasing predetermined operating times $T_0, T_1, T_2, T_3, \dots$ at the regular intervals of the rest-times $t_0, t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots$, equivalent to the period of time required for, e.g., 600 prints, as shown in Fig. 3B.

More specifically, the unit 30 reads blade counter data A , indicative of the frequency of operation of the blade 22, from the memory of the control device. If the data A is "10," as shown in Fig. 5, the unit 30 reads the next blade counter data B . If the data A is not "10," the unit 30 executes a subroutine "A-COUNT." After the execution, the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data B is "8," the unit 30 reads the next blade counter data C . If the data B is not "8," the unit 30 executes a subroutine "B-COUNT." After the execution, the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data C is "5," the unit 30 executes a subroutine "D-COUNT," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data C is

not "5," a subroutine "C-COUNT" is executed, whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "A-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 6, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E , indicative of the number of prints, from the memory. If the data E is less than "600," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes one revolution. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E , and counts up the counter data A by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "B-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 7, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "600," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes two revolutions. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E , and counts up the counter data B by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "C-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 8, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "600," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes three revolutions. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E , and counts up the counter data C by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "D-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 9, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "600," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes four revolutions. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1, and clears the counter data E , whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

Thus, according to the second operating mode, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make one revolution while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum, thereby cleaning the drum,

for each 600 prints before 6,000 (= 600 × 10) prints are made after the start of printing. Before 4,800 (= 600 × 8) prints are made thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make two revolutions while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 600 prints. Before 3,000 (= 600 × 5) prints are made thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make three revolutions while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 600 prints. Thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make four revolutions while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 600 prints.

Thus, by extending the operating time of the blade 22 in proportion to the increase of the working time of the electrophotographic apparatus, the residual toner adhering to the surface of the drum 1 can be securely removed.

If the third mode is established, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 for the regular operating times T0, T1, T2, T3, ..., equivalent to the period of time required for, e.g., one print, at gradually reducing rest-times t0, t1, t2, t3, ..., as shown in Fig. 3C.

More specifically, the unit 30 reads the blade counter data A, indicative of the frequency of operation of the blade 22, from the memory of the control device. If the data A is "10," as shown in Fig. 10, the unit 30 reads the next blade counter data B. If the data A is not "10," the unit 30 executes the subroutine "A-COUNT." After the execution, the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data B is "10," the unit 30 reads the next blade counter data C. If the data B is not "10," the unit 30 executes the subroutine "B-COUNT." After the execution, the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data C is "10," the unit 30 executes the subroutine "D-COUNT," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the counter data C is not "10," the subroutine "C-COUNT" is executed, whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "A-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 11, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E, indicative of the number of prints, from the memory. If the data E is less than "600," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "600," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes one revolution. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E, and counts up the counter data A by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "B-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 12, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "400," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "400," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes one revolution. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E, and counts up the counter data B by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "C-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 13, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "300," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "300," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes one revolution. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1. Thereafter, the unit 30 clears the counter data E, and counts up the counter data C by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine.

In the subroutine "D-COUNT," as shown in Fig. 14, the control unit 30 first reads the counter data E from the memory. If the data E is less than "200," it is counted up by "+1," whereupon the program returns to the main routine. If the data E is "200," the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1. Thus, the drum is cleaned while it makes one revolution. Then, the unit 30 turns off the solenoid 25 to disengage the blade 22 from the drum 1, and clears the counter data E, where upon the program returns to the main routine.

Thus, according to the third operating mode, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make one revolution while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 600 prints before 6,000 (= 600 × 10) prints are made after the start of printing. Before 4,000 (= 400 × 10) prints are made thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make one revolution while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 400 prints. Before 3,000 (= 300 × 10) prints are made thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make one revolution while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 300 prints. Thereafter, the unit 30 causes the drum 1 to make one revolution while bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby cleaning the drum, for each 200 prints.

Thus, by shortening the rest-time of the blade 22 in proportion to the increase of the working time of the electrophotographic apparatus, the residual toner adhering to the surface of the drum 1 can be securely removed.

In each of the first to third modes, the result of printing may sometimes indicate unsatisfactory cleaning. In such a case, a lot of defective prints will inevitably be produced until the control unit 30 causes, in each operating mode, the blade 22 to perform supplementary cleaning.

In case of defective printing, such as blackening of the printable surface, therefore, an operator depresses the key 31 on the control panel of the automatic control device. Thereupon, an optional command signal is entered in the control unit 30, so that the unit 30 turns on the solenoid 25 to bring the blade 22 into contact with the drum surface, thereby effecting the supplementary cleaning, for the predetermined time T_r (equivalent to the period for one revolution of the drum), as shown in Fig. 15, even during a rest-time of the mechanical cleaning system 20.

In case of defective printing moreover, the operator can directly manually operate the blade 22 for the supplementary cleaning. More specifically, the operator can perform the supplementary cleaning by rotating the lever 24 in the direction of arrow A of Fig. 1 by means of the knob 24b, thereby bringing the blade 22 into contact with the surface of the drum 1.

Thus, by entering the command signal in the control unit 30 through the key 31, or by manual operation, the cleaning capacity can be quickly increased as required to eliminate defective printing, without interrupting the operation of the apparatus.

According to the electrophotographic apparatus constructed in this manner, the magnetic cleaning system 14 integral with the developing device 4 is combined with the mechanical cleaning system 20 including the blade 22, and the control unit 30 is used to cause the blade 22 of the system 20 to touch and leave the surface of the photoreceptor drum 1. In this arrangement, the drum 1, which are normally cleaned by means of the magnetic cleaning system 14, can enjoy automatic intermittent supplemental cleaning by means of the mechanical cleaning system 20, which supplements the cleaning capacity of the system 14. Thus, stable cleaning can be ensured for a long period of time, and the print quality and printing efficiency can be prevented from lowering.

The control unit 30 is designed so as to cause the blade 22 to repeat contact with and disengagement from the drum 1 at the predetermined time intervals. Accordingly, the blade 22 can be brought into contact with the drum 1 for supplementary

cleaning at suitable time intervals. Thus, the cleaning capacity can be supplemented without damaging the surface of the drum 1.

Further, the control unit 30 is designed so as to bring the blade 22 into contact with the drum 1 in response to an optional command signal even during a rest-time of the mechanical cleaning system 20. If defective printing is caused by unsatisfactory cleaning, therefore, the control unit 30 drives the mechanical cleaning system 20 to effect the supplementary cleaning in response to the optional command signal, thereby quickly compensating the deficiency in the cleaning effect. In consequence, the drum 1 can be stably cleaned for a longer period of time.

Since the blade 22 is not always in contact with the drum 1, moreover, the pressure of contact between the blade 22 and the drum 1 can be set higher than in the case of an apparatus in which a blade is always in contact with a drum. Accordingly, the residual toner, having failed to be removed by the magnetic cleaning system 14, can be easily scraped off by the blade 22. Also for this reason, prolonged stable cleaning can be ensured.

Furthermore, the mechanical cleaning system 20 is constructed so that the blade 22 can be brought into contact with or disengaged from the drum 1 with suitable timing by manual operation from outside the apparatus. If unsatisfactory cleaning is revealed by the result of printing, therefore, the mechanical cleaning system 20 can be manually operated to supplement the cleaning capacity of the magnetic cleaning system 14. Thus, the cleaning capacity can be improved in accordance with the result of printing, without interrupting the operation of the apparatus. Consequently, the print quality and printing efficiency can be prevented from lowering for a long period of time.

Further, the mechanical cleaning system 20 is designed so that the blade 22 can be brought into contact with the drum 1 by manually rotating the lever 24. Accordingly, the pressure of contact between the blade 22 and the drum 1 can be suitably changed by adjusting the stroke of the blade 22. Thus, the cleaning capacity of the whole apparatus can be properly adjusted in accordance with the result of printing. In this case, the scale 8 for measuring the shift of the lever 24 is located in the vicinity of the opening 7a of the casing 7, so that the cleaning capacity can be easily adjusted by utilizing the scale 8.

By bringing the blade 22 into contact with the drum 1 by manual operation, moreover, the paper dust from the large-sized paper sheet 9 can be rubbed off to be prevented from entering the developing device 4. Thus, developing can be effected so smoothly that the print quality can be prevented from lowering.

Since most of the residual toner is recovered for reuse by the magnetic cleaning system 14, the waste toner receiving portion 23 of the mechanical cleaning system 20 need not be made large in size, thus constituting no hindrance to the reduction in size of the electrophotographic apparatus.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiment described above, and that various changes and modifications may be effected therein by one skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the claims.

The above embodiment was described with reference to an apparatus wherein the surface of the drum is cleaned by the magnetic cleaning system 14 while the drum makes one revolution after the image forming cycle is finished. However, the present invention is applicable also to an electrophotographic apparatus wherein development and magnetic cleaning are simultaneously performed by use of a developing device integral with a magnetic cleaning system.

In the embodiment described above, the lever 24 of the mechanical cleaning system 20 is designed so that its upper portion projects to the outside of the casing 7. Alternatively, however, the lever 24 may be arranged so that it cannot be carelessly operated to cause the blade 22 to damage the drum 1. More specifically, the whole lever 24 may be housed in the casing 7, as shown in Fig. 16, so that the lever 24 can be rotated manually to operate the blade 22 after lifting a cover 7b which is swingably attached to the opening 7a of the casing 7.

In the above embodiment, moreover, the key 3 on the control panel is used as the means for entering the optional command signal in the control unit 30. Alternatively, however, a switch (not shown) for optional command signal output may be disposed at a position in the vicinity of the lever 24 or the like where the result of printing can be directly observed. In this arrangement, the optional command signal is entered in the control unit 30 by means of the switch, which can be depressed while observing the printing result. If the printing result indicates unsatisfactory cleaning, the operator can immediately depress the switch to actuate the blade 22 for supplementary cleaning. Thus, defective printing can be more quickly eliminated.

The output switch may be designed so that the optional command signal can be entered in the control unit 30 only while the switch is being manually depressed. Further, the switch may be arranged so as to be mechanically locked, thereby allowing the optional command signal to go on being inputted, when manually depressed.

Claims

1. An electrophotographic apparatus, comprising:
5 image forming means (10) including an image carrier (1), for forming an image on a recording medium;
main cleaning means (14) for forming a visible image on a surface of the image carrier and cleaning the surface of the image carrier for each image formation cycle;
10 mechanical cleaning means (20) for mechanically cleaning the surface of the image carrier, said mechanical cleaning means including a contact member (22) movable between a contact position where the contact member is in contact with the surface of the image carrier, to clean the surface, and a non-contact position where the contact member is kept apart from the surface of the image carrier, the contact member normally being in the non-contact position; and
15 actuating means for selectively moving the contact member from the non-contact position to the contact position;
20 characterized in that:
25 said actuating means includes drive means (25) for moving the contact member to the contact position, and control means (30) for actuating, in use, the drive means at predetermined time intervals (t0, t1,...) and for predetermined operating time durations (T0, T1,...), said control means including means for changing, in use, at least one of said operating time durations and said time intervals after a predetermined number of said time intervals has elapsed.
30
35
40
45
50
55
2. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said actuating means includes input means (31) for entering a command signal in the control means (30), and said control means includes means for actuating the drive means to move the contact member (22) to the contact position for a predetermined period of time without regard to said time intervals, in response to the command signal.
3. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said control means (30) actuates the drive means at regular time intervals, for gradually increasing the operating time duration.
4. An apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said control means (30) actuates the drive means at gradually reducing time intervals, for the same operating time duration.

5. An electrophotographic apparatus, comprising:
 image forming means (10) including an image carrier (1) for forming an image on a recording medium;
 main cleaning means (14) for forming a visible image on a surface of the image carrier and cleaning the surface of the image carrier after each image formation cycle;
 mechanical cleaning means (20) for mechanically cleaning the surface of the image carrier, said mechanical cleaning means including a contact member (22) movable between a contact position where the contact member is in contact with the surface of the image carrier, to clean the surface, and a non-contact position where the contact member is kept apart from the surface of the image carrier, the contact member normally being in the non-contact position;
 a casing (7) containing the image forming means, the main cleaning means and the mechanical cleaning means, said casing having an opening (7a); and
 actuating means for selectively moving the contact member from the non-contact position to the contact position,
characterized in that
 said actuating means includes an operating member (24) coupled to the contact member (22) and being movable integrally therewith, said operating member having an end portion and being manually operable from outside the casing, said actuating means including indicating means (8) for indicating a shifting of said operating member.

6. An apparatus according to claim 5, characterized in that the end portion of the operating member projects outwardly from the casing through said opening (7a) of the casing.

7. An apparatus according to claim 5 or 6, characterized in that said indicating means has a scale formed on the outer surface of the casing, in the vicinity of the opening.

8. An apparatus according to claim 5, characterized in that said operating member is arranged in the casing (7) and said end portion of the operating member faces said opening (7a); and
 a cover (7b) is provided for exposing and closing said opening (7a) of the casing (7).

5
 10
 15
 20
 25
 30
 35
 40
 45
 50
 55

nem Bildträger (1) zum Ausbilden eines Bildes auf einem Aufzeichnungsmedium;
 eine Hauptreinigungsvorrichtung (14) zum Ausbilden eines sichtbaren Bildes auf der Oberfläche des Bildträgers und zum Reinigen der Oberfläche des Bildträgers für jeden Bildformungszyklus;
 eine mechanische Reinigungsvorrichtung (20) zum mechanischen Reinigen der Oberfläche des Bildträgers, wobei die mechanische Reinigungsvorrichtung ein Kontaktteil (22) aufweist, das bewegbar ist zwischen einer Kontakt-Position, in der das Kontaktteil mit der Oberfläche des Bildträgers zur Reinigung derselben Kontakt hat, und einer Nicht-Kontakt-Position, in der das Kontaktteil von der Oberfläche des Bildträgers entfernt gehalten wird, wobei das Kontaktteil normalerweise in der Nicht-Kontakt-Position ist; und
 eine Betätigungs vorrichtung zum selektiven Bewegen des Kontaktteils aus der Nicht-Kontakt-Position in die Kontakt-Position;
dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß
 die Betätigungs vorrichtung eine Antriebs vorrichtung (25) zum Bewegen des Kontaktteils in die Kontakt-Position aufweist und eine Steuerungsvorrichtung (30) zur Betätigung ("im Betriebsfall") der Antriebs vorrichtung in bestimmten Zeitabständen (t0, t1,...) und für bestimmte Laufzeiten (T0, T1,...), wobei die Steuerungsvorrichtung eine Vorrichtung zum Ändern ("im Betriebsfall") von zumindest einer der Laufzeiten oder der Zeitabstände nach einer bestimmten Anzahl verstrichener Zeitabstände aufweist.

2. Gerät nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Betätigungs vorrichtung eine Eingabevorrichtung (31) zur Eingabe eines Befehls signals in die Steuerungsvorrichtung (31) aufweist, und daß die Steuerungsvorrichtung eine Vorrichtung zur Betätigung der Antriebs vorrichtung aufweist, um das Kontaktteil (22) für eine bestimmte Zeitdauer unabhängig von den Zeitabständen in die Kontakt-Position zu bewegen in Abhängigkeit von dem Befehls signal.

3. Gerät nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Steuerungsvorrichtung (30) die Antriebs vorrichtung in regelmäßigen Zeitabständen betätigt zum allmählichen Vergrößern der Laufzeit.

4. Gerät nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Steuerungsvorrichtung (30) die Antriebs vorrichtung in allmählich kleiner werdenden Zeitabständen betätigt für die gleiche

Patentansprüche

1. Elektrophotographisches Gerät umfassend:
 eine Bildformungsvorrichtung (10) mit ei-

Laufzeit.

5. Elektrophotographisches Gerät umfassend:
 - eine Bildformungsvorrichtung (10) mit einem Bildträger (1) zum Ausbilden eines Bildes auf einem Aufzeichnungsmedium;
 - eine Hauptreinigungsvorrichtung (14) zum Ausbilden eines sichtbaren Bildes auf einer Oberfläche des Bildträgers und zum Reinigen der Oberfläche des Bildträgers für jeden Bildformungszyklus;
 - eine mechanische Reinigungsvorrichtung (20) zum mechanischen Reinigen der Oberfläche des Bildträgers, wobei die mechanische Reinigungsvorrichtung ein Kontaktteil (22) aufweist, das bewegbar ist zwischen einer Kontakt-Position, in der das Kontaktteil mit der Oberfläche des Bildträgers zur Reinigung derselben Kontakt hat, und einer Nicht-Kontakt-Position, in der das Kontaktteil von der Oberfläche des Bildträgers entfernt gehalten wird, wobei das Kontaktteil normalerweise in der Nicht-Kontakt-Position ist;
 - ein Gehäuse (7), das die Bildformungsvorrichtung, die Hauptreinigungsvorrichtung und die mechanische Reinigungsvorrichtung enthält, wobei das Gehäuse eine Öffnung (7a) aufweist; und
 - eine Betätigungs vorrichtung zum selektiven Bewegen des Kontaktteils aus der Nicht-Kontakt-Position in die Kontakt-Position; **dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß**
 - die Betätigungs vorrichtung ein Bedienteil (24) umfaßt, das mit dem Kontaktteil (22) gekoppelt und mit diesem vollständig bewegbar ist, wobei das Bedienteil einen Endbereich besitzt und von außerhalb des Gehäuses manuell bedienbar ist, wobei die Betätigungs vorrichtung eine Anzeigevorrichtung (8) zur Anzeige einer Verschiebung des Bedienteils aufweist.
6. Gerät nach Anspruch 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Endbereich des Bedienteils durch die Öffnung (7a) des Gehäuses hindurch nach Außen vorragt.
7. Gerät nach Anspruch 5 oder 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Anzeigevorrichtung eine Skala aufweist, die an der äußeren Fläche des Gehäuses nahe der Öffnung ausgebildet ist.
8. Gerät nach Anspruch 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Bedienteil im Gehäuse (7) angeordnet ist und der Endbereich des Bedienteils der Öffnung (1a) gegenüberliegt, und daß eine Abdeckung (7b) vorgesehen ist, die die Öffnung (7a) des Gehäuses freilegt oder verschließt.

Revendications

5 1. Appareil électrophotographique comprenant :
10 un moyen de formation d'image (10) incluant un support d'image (1) pour former une image sur un support d'enregistrement ;
15 un moyen de nettoyage principal (14) pour former une image visible sur une surface du support d'image et pour nettoyer la surface du support d'image pour chaque cycle de formation d'image ;
20 un moyen de nettoyage mécanique (20) pour nettoyer mécaniquement la surface du support d'image, ledit moyen de nettoyage mécanique incluant un élément de contact (22) mobile entre une position de contact dans laquelle l'élément de contact est en contact avec la surface du support d'image afin de nettoyer la surface et une position de non contact dans laquelle l'élément de contact est maintenu éloigné de la surface du support d'image, l'élément de contact étant normalement dans la position de non contact ; et
25 un moyen d'actionnement pour déplacer sélectivement l'élément de contact depuis la position de non contact jusqu'à la position de contact,
30 caractérisé en ce que :
35 ledit moyen d'actionnement inclut un moyen d'entraînement (25) pour déplacer l'élément de contact jusqu'à la position de contact et un moyen de commande (30) pour activer, en fonctionnement, le moyen d'entraînement selon des intervalles temporels prédéterminés (t0, t1, ...) et pendant des durées temporelles de fonctionnement prédéterminées (T0, T1, ...), ledit moyen de commande incluant un moyen pour modifier, en fonctionnement, au moins un élément pris parmi lesdites durées temporelles de fonctionnement et lesdits intervalles temporels après qu'un nombre prédéterminé desdits intervalles temporels se sont écoulés.
40
45 2. Appareil selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que ledit moyen d'actionnement inclut un moyen d'entrée (31) pour entre un signal de commande dans le moyen de commande (30) et ledit moyen de commande inclut un moyen pour activer le moyen d'entraînement afin de déplacer l'élément de contact (22) jusqu'à la position de contact pendant une période temporelle prédéterminée sans considération desdits intervalles temporels, en réponse au signal de commande.
50
55 3. Appareil selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que ledit moyen de commande (30) active le moyen d'entraînement selon des in-

intervalles temporels réguliers pour augmenter progressivement la durée temporelle de fonctionnement.

4. Appareil selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que ledit moyen de commande (30) active le moyen d'entraînement selon des intervalles temporels diminuant progressivement pour la même durée temporelle de fonctionnement. 5

5. Appareil électrophotographique comprenant :
 un moyen de formation d'image (10) incluant un support d'image (1) pour former une image sur un support d'enregistrement ; 15
 un moyen de nettoyage principal (14) pour former une image visible sur une surface du support d'image et pour nettoyer la surface du support d'image après chaque cycle de formation d'image ;
 un moyen de nettoyage mécanique (20) pour nettoyer mécaniquement la surface du support d'image, ledit moyen de nettoyage mécanique incluant un élément de contact (22) mobile entre une position de contact dans laquelle l'élément de contact est en contact avec la surface du support d'image, afin de nettoyer la surface, et une position de non contact dans laquelle l'élément de contact est maintenu éloigné de la surface du support d'image, l'élément de contact étant normalement dans la position de non contact ;
 un boîtier (7) contenant le moyen de formation d'image, le moyen de nettoyage principal et le moyen de nettoyage mécanique, ledit boîtier comportant une ouverture (7a) ; et
 un moyen d'activation pour déplacer sélectivement l'élément de contact depuis la position de non contact jusqu'à la position de contact, 20
 caractérisé en ce que :
 ledit moyen d'actionnement inclut un élément de fonctionnement (24) couplé à l'élément de contact (22) et mobile d'un seul tenant avec, ledit élément de fonctionnement comportant une partie d'extrémité et pouvant être activé manuellement depuis l'extérieur du boîtier, ledit moyen d'activation incluant un moyen d'indication (8) pour indiquer un décalage audit élément de fonctionnement. 25

6. Appareil selon la revendication 5, caractérisé en ce que la partie d'extrémité de l'élément de fonctionnement se projette vers l'extérieur depuis le boîtier au travers de ladite ouverture (7a) du boîtier. 30

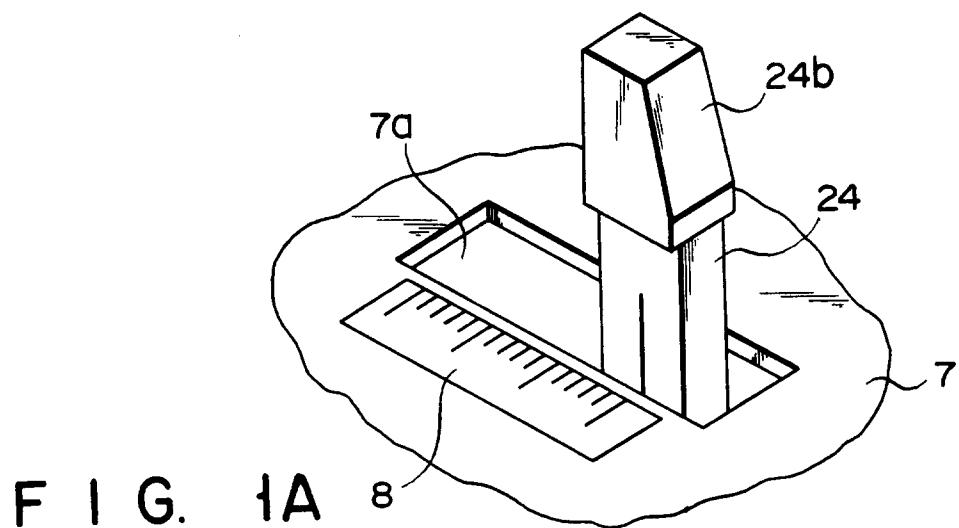
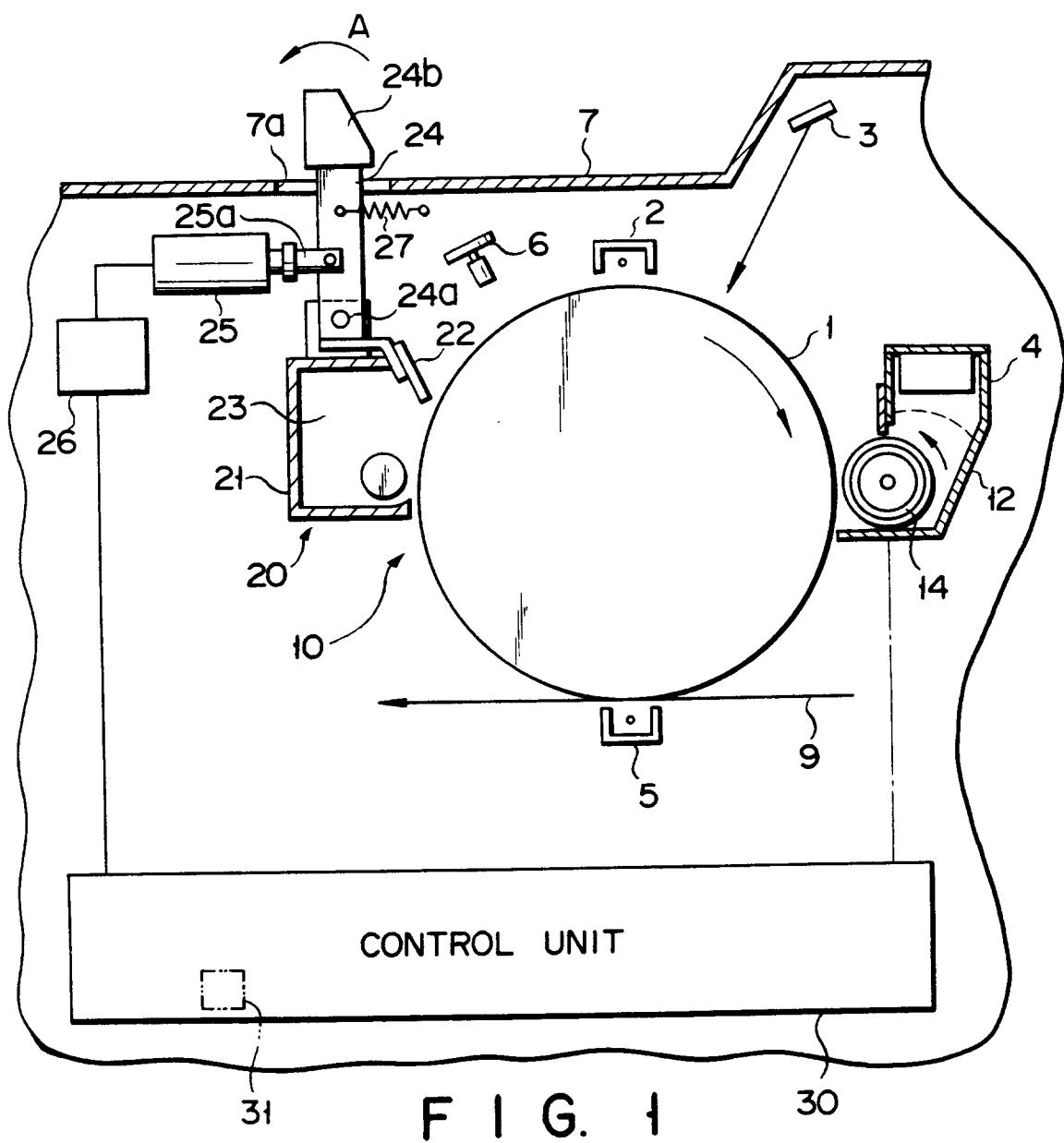
7. Appareil selon la revendication 5 ou 6, caractérisé en ce que ledit moyen d'indication comporte une échelle formée sur la surface externe du boîtier, au voisinage de l'ouverture. 35

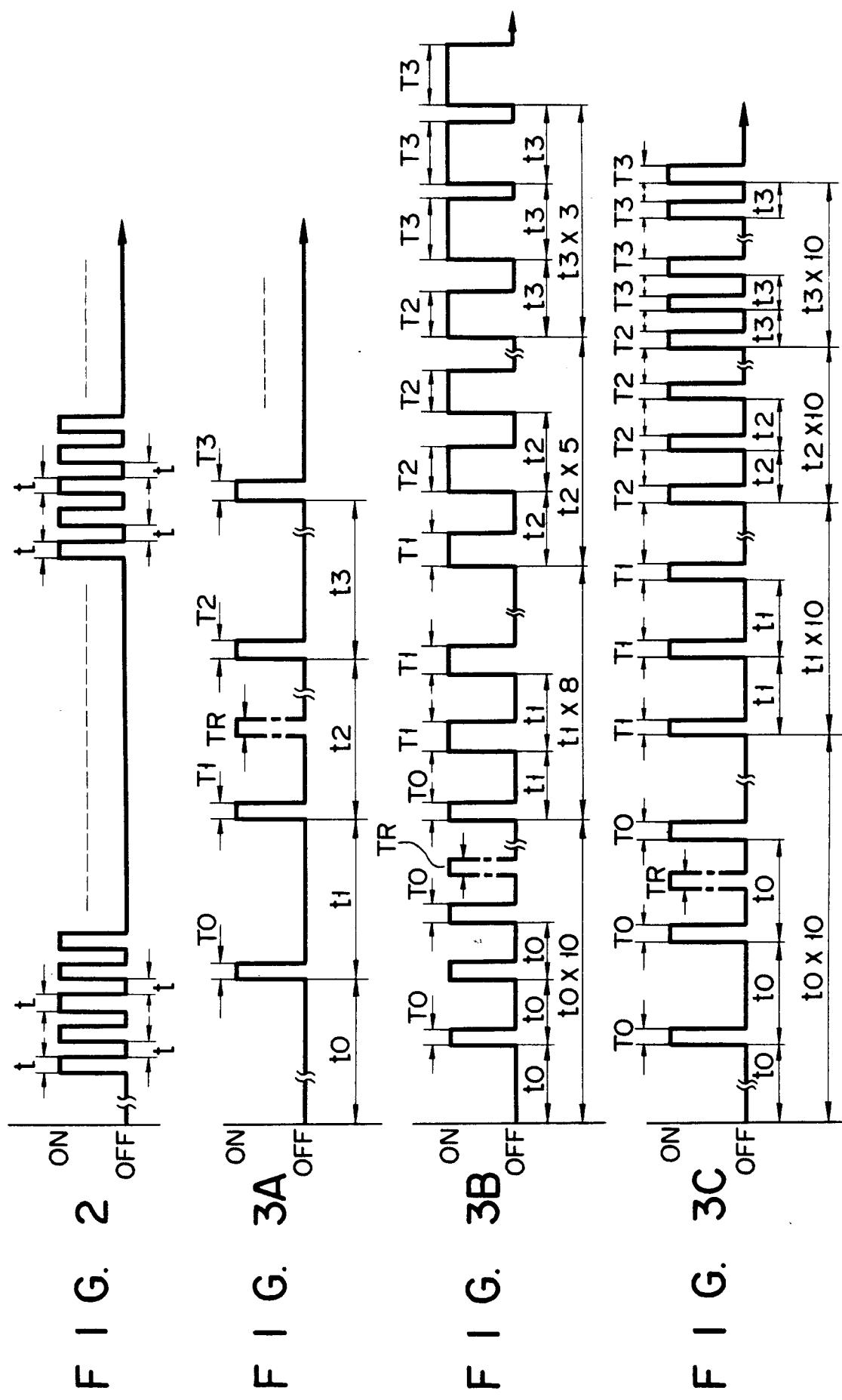
8. Appareil selon la revendication 5, caractérisé en ce que ledit élément de fonctionnement est agencé dans le boîtier (7) et ladite partie d'extrémité de l'élément de fonctionnement fait face à ladite ouverture (7a) ;
 un couvercle (7b) est prévu pour exposer et fermer ladite ouverture (7a) du boîtier (7). 40

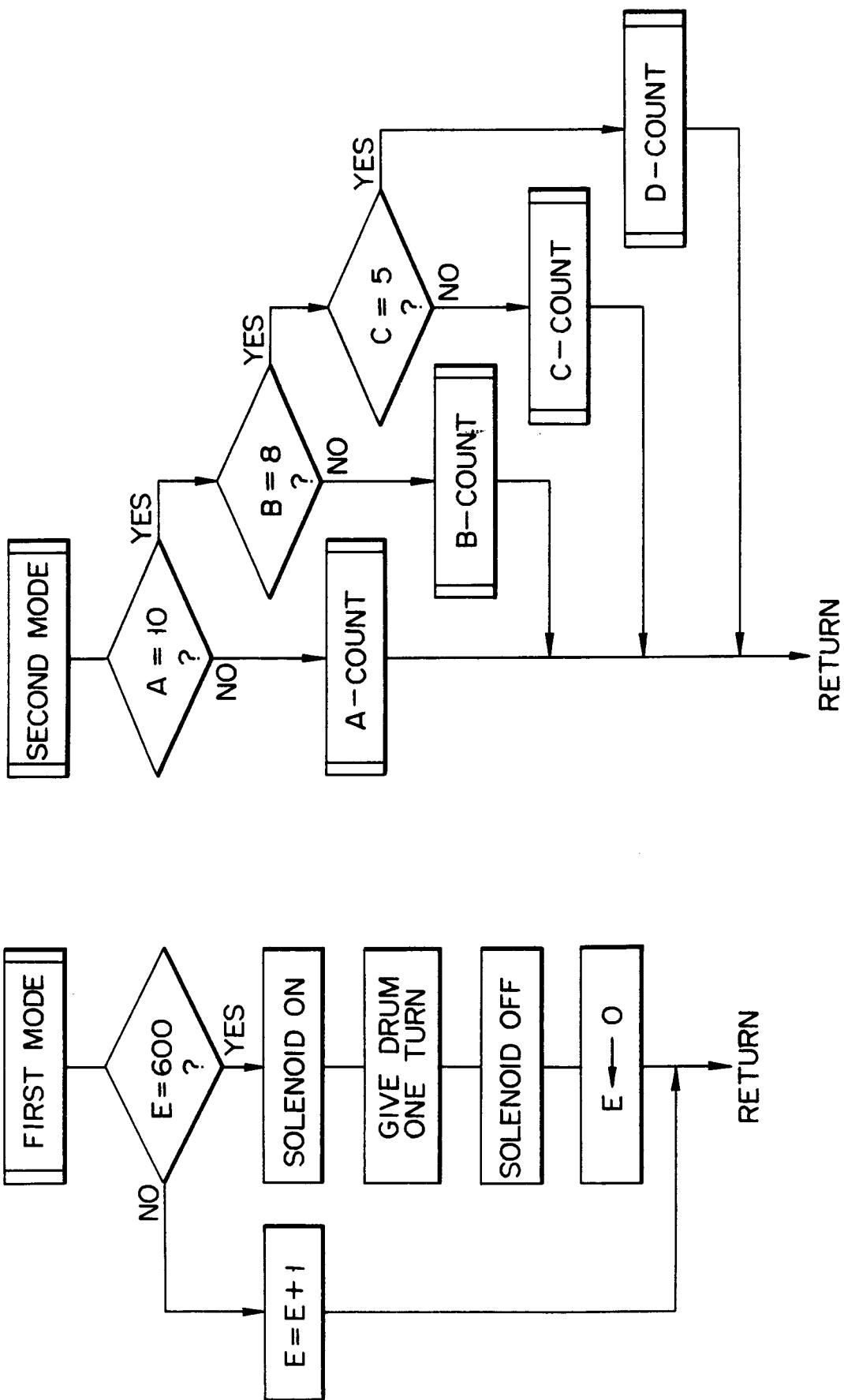
45

50

55







F | G. 4

F | G. 5

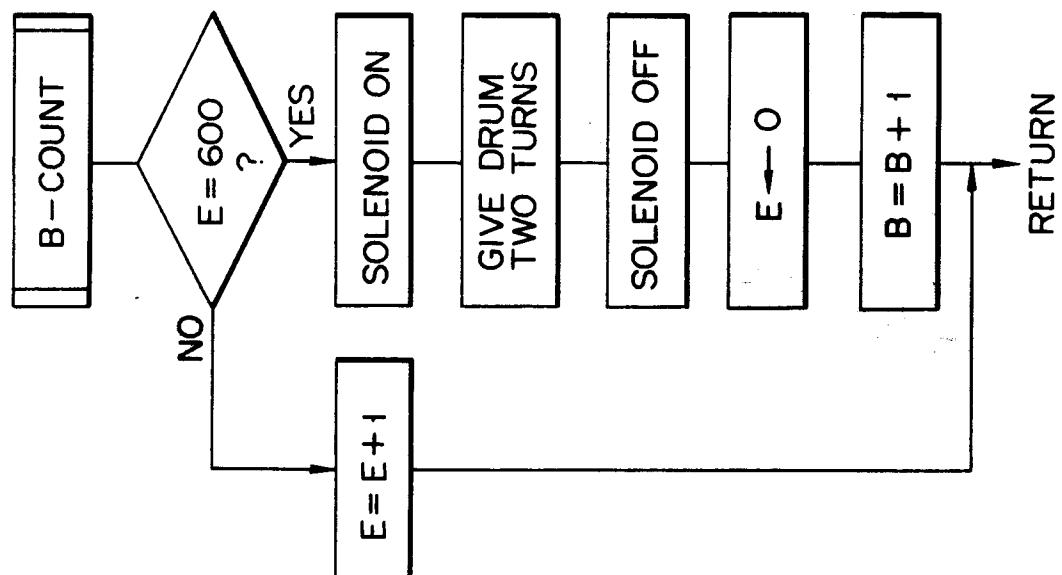


FIG. 7

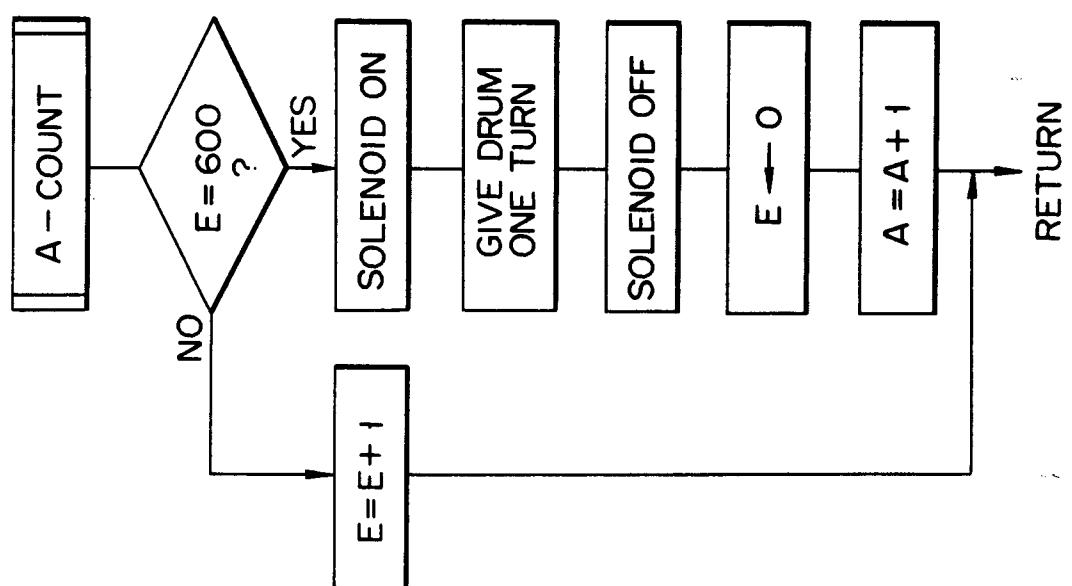
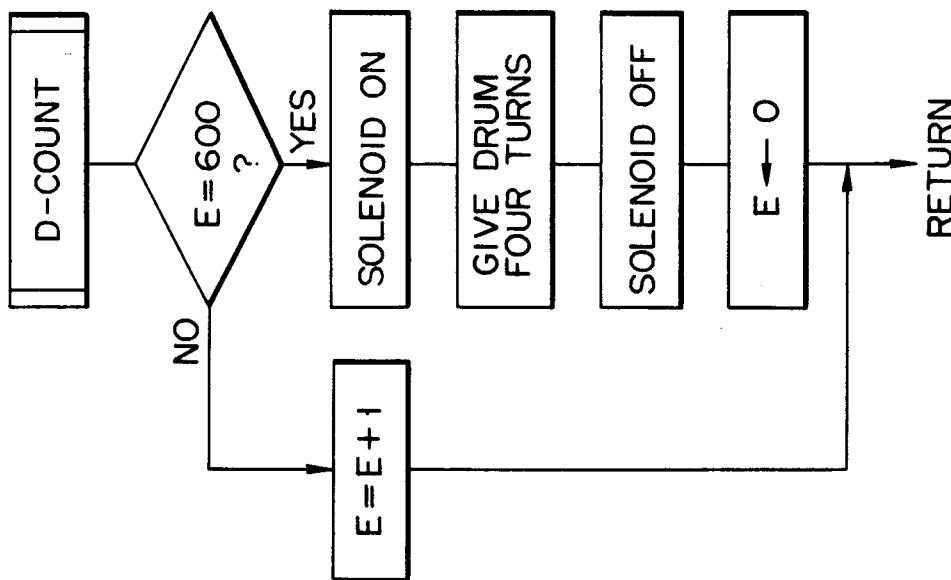
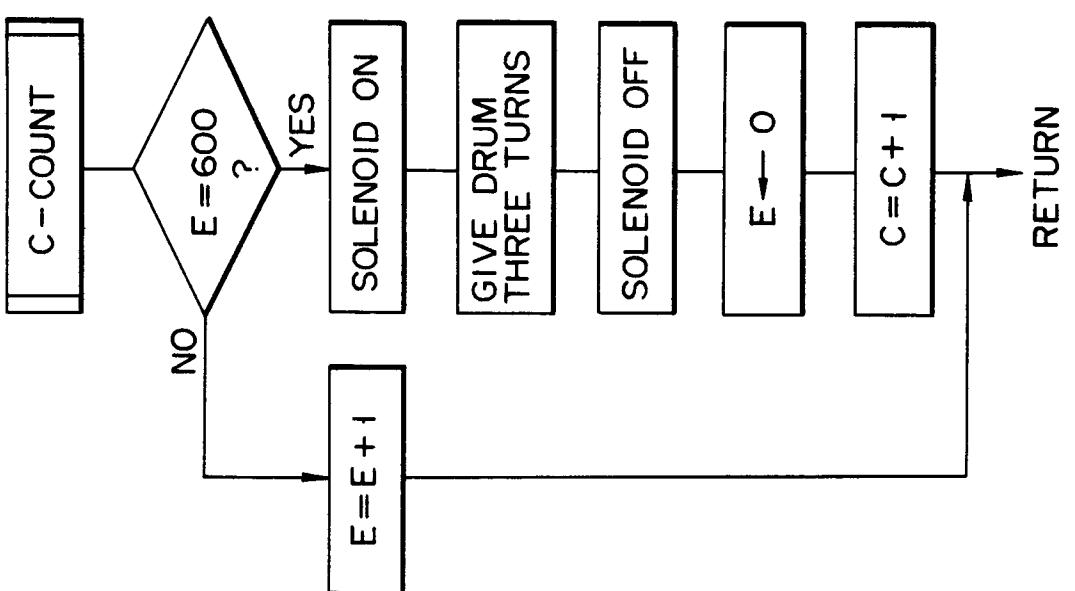


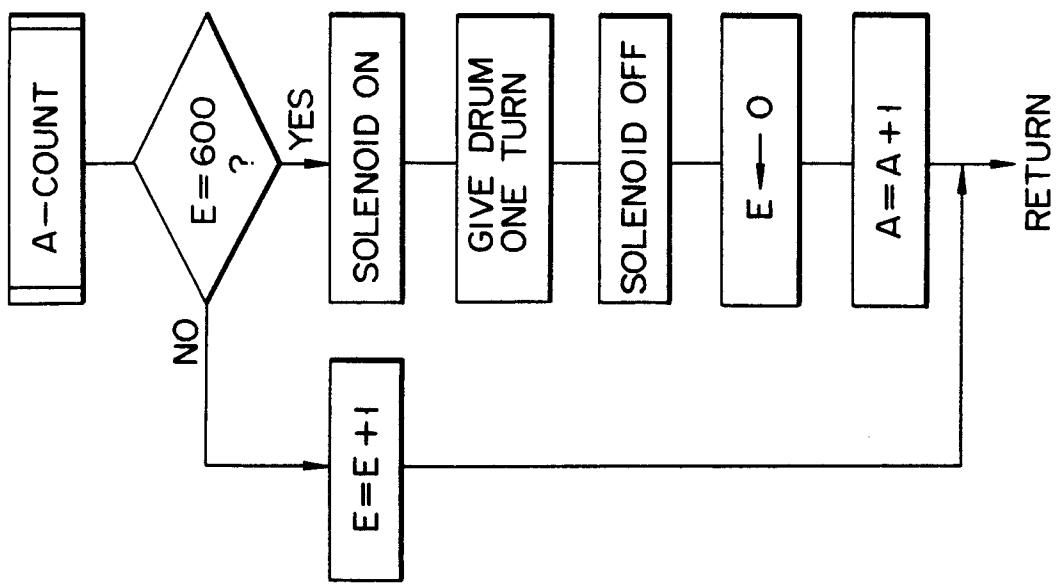
FIG. 6



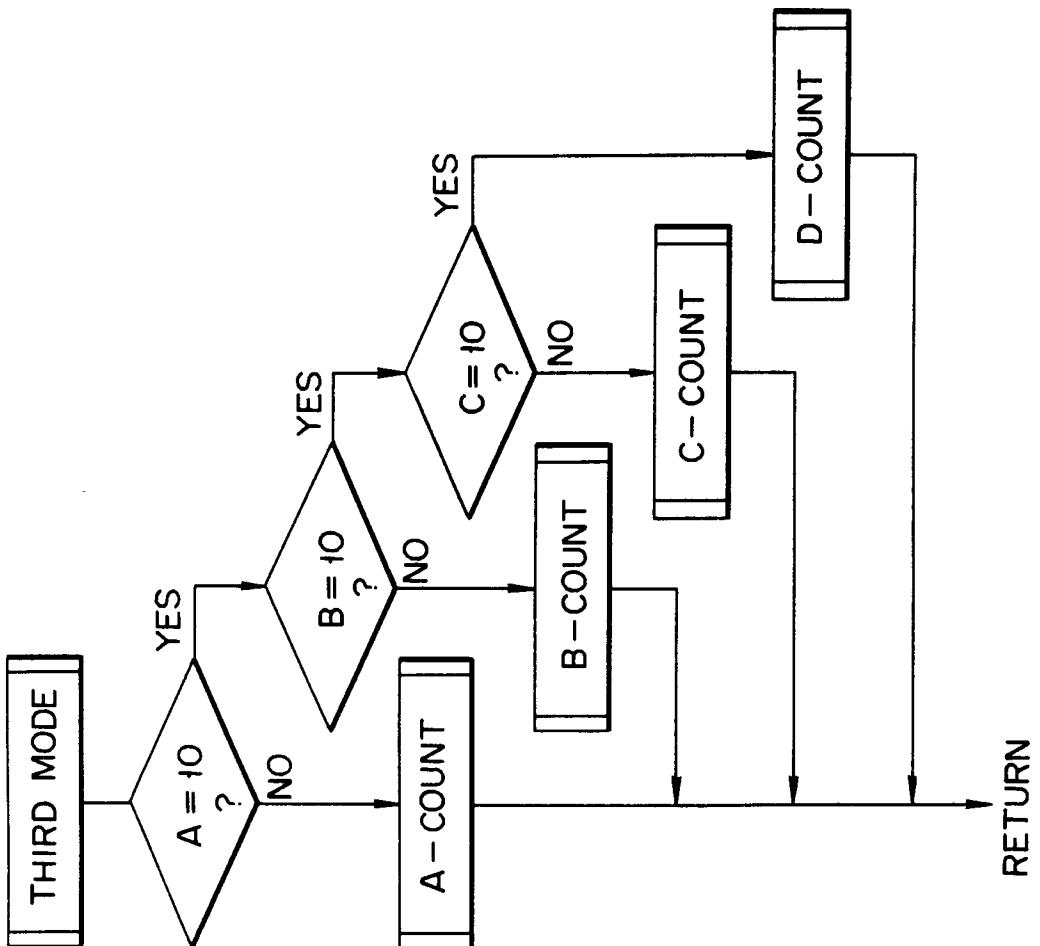
F I G. 9



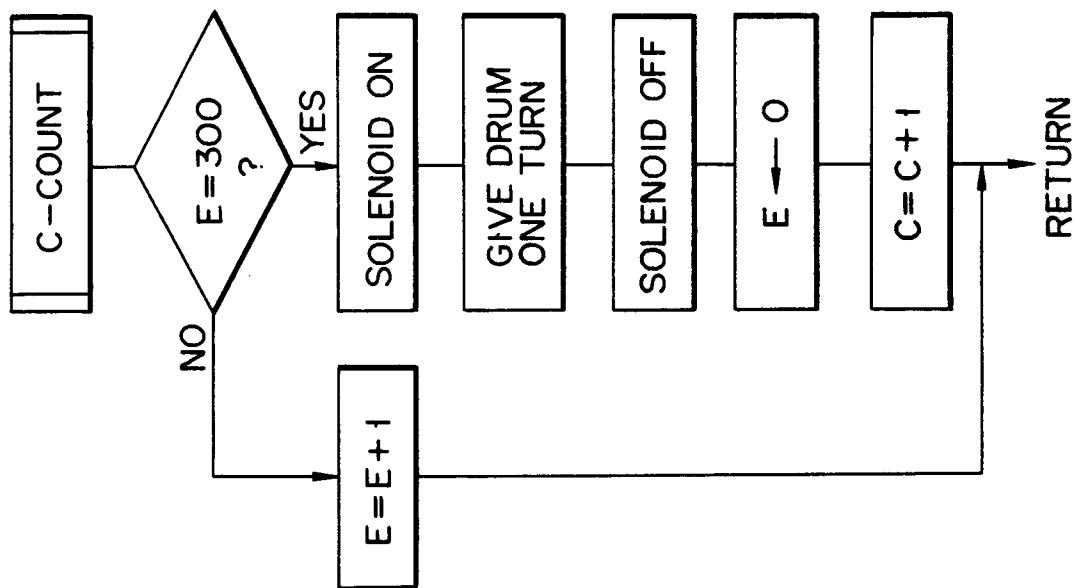
F I G. 8



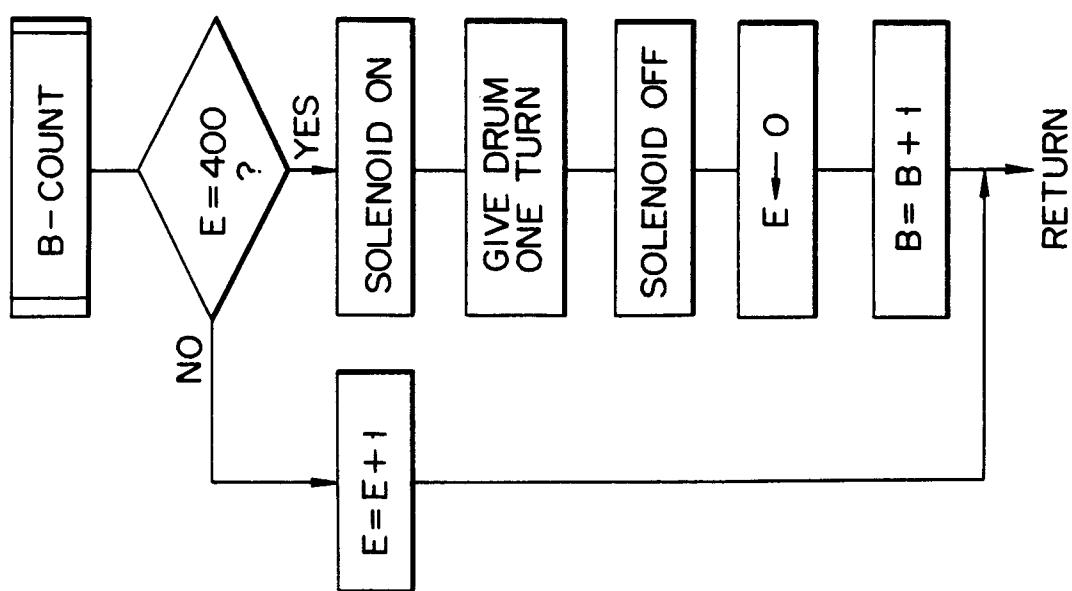
F I G. 11



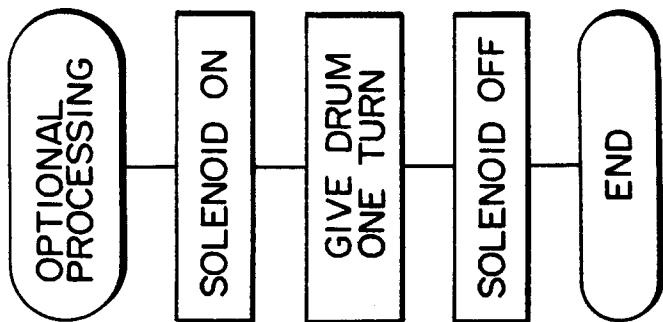
F I G. 10



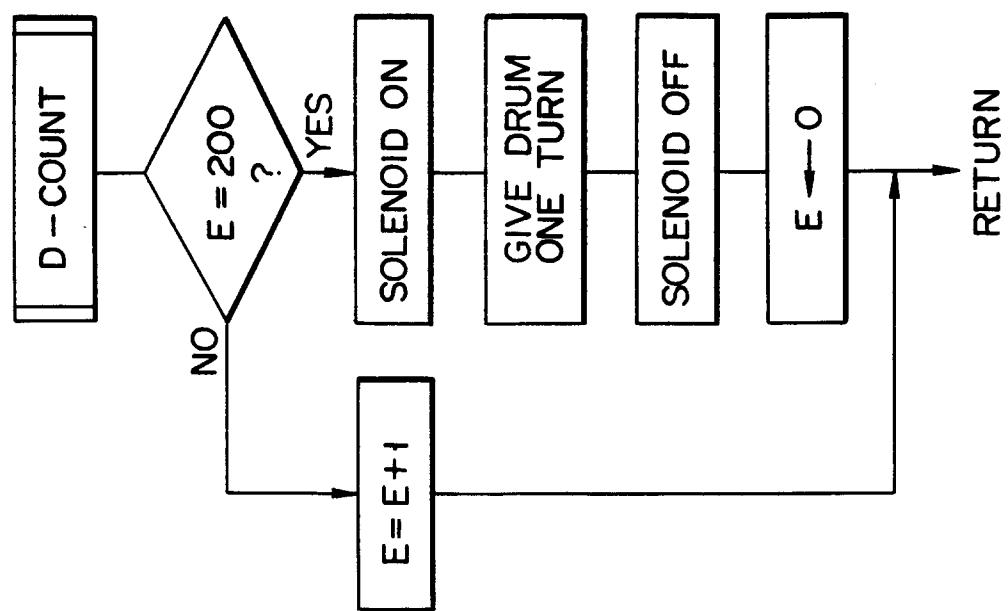
F1 G. 13



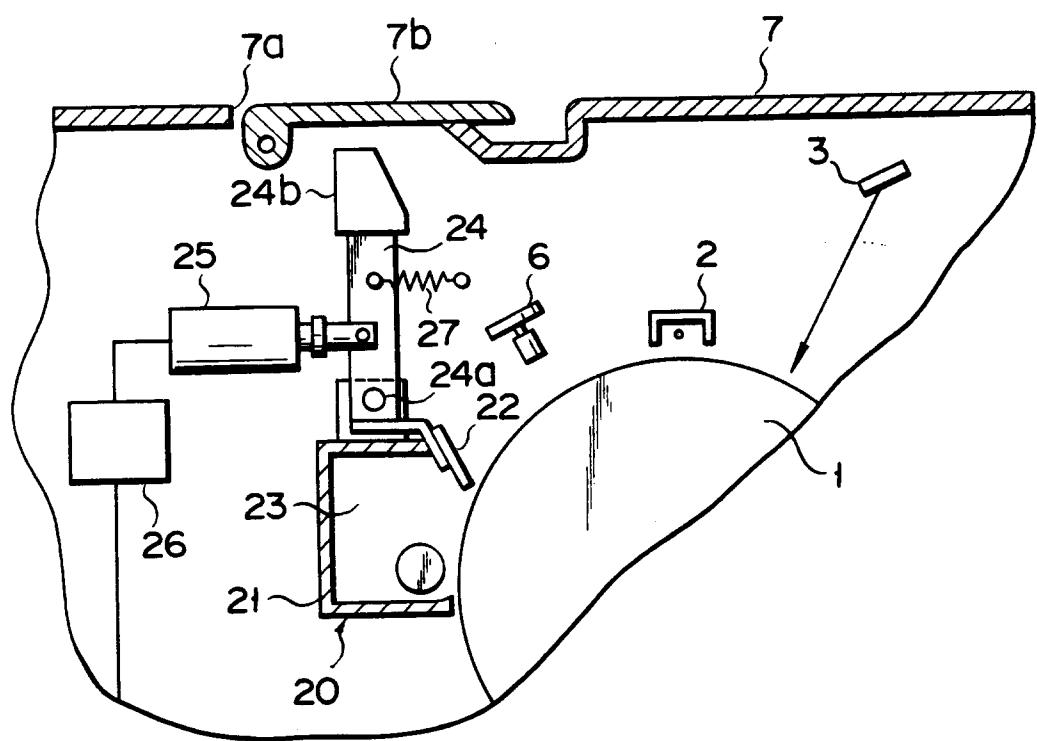
F1 G. 12



F I G. 15



F I G. 14



F I G. 16